

Service-Learning Projects

From 1997, to 1999 in the 2x4x8 Fostering Resiliency Program, approximately 1,800 Wisconsin middle school students participated in service-learning projects. Student ownership began with the development of ideas for projects to benefit their communities and continued with planning, research, problem-solving, and implementing these projects. The final step of reflection and evaluation helped students understand the success of their endeavors.

65 community projects were designed and implemented:

- ✗ Eight fundraising projects, many based on recycling, raising funds for Habitat for Humanity, the Humane Society, and other community efforts and agencies.
- ✗ Seven water-quality improvement and protection projects.
- ✗ Six community walking trails, including a trail equipped with exercise stations.
- ✗ Five school landscaping projects.
- ✗ Four projects focusing on community clean up.
- ✗ Four intergenerational projects with elderly community residents.
- ✗ Three school grounds and school forest or pond restoration projects.
- ✗ Three political debates hosted by students.
- ✗ Three school buildings outfitted with room number plaques to make schools more welcoming to new students and visitors.
- ✗ A nationally recognized, award-winning teen pregnancy prevention public service announcement.
- ✗ Three America Reads projects (tutoring elementary students) and 25 books written, illustrated and donated to the district's elementary school library.
- ✗ Two projects for the Department of Natural Resources: a deer hunting survey and a sharp-tailed grouse survey.
- ✗ Two projects for the National Parks Service: a curriculum on forest preservation and informational pamphlets on exotic species.
- ✗ Two annual entertainment events for the patients and families of University of Wisconsin Children's Hospital.
- ✗ A two-year maple syrup production project
- ✗ The founding of a community choir.
- ✗ A picnic table project for school and community, including tables accessible to wheel chairs and tables donated to the local hospital.
- ✗ Handmade infant clothing and blankets for low-income or homeless new mothers.
- ✗ An all-day fitness day for elementary school students.
- ✗ School improvement projects, including a renovated exercise and weight room, a two-year nutritional snack program, a student designed and implemented social studies curriculum, a Career Day developed and hosted by students, three student newspapers, and one year book.

The Teens Against Teen Pregnancy project brought River Bluff Middle students and teacher Mark Mueller to Washington to meet with Harris Wofford (CEO of the Corporation for National Service), and Marilyn Smith (Director, Learn and Serve America Department).



Findings

Compared to students who did not participate in service-learning projects, participating students earned a higher grade-point average. In a comparison with two other school districts where service-learning was not practiced, Grantsburg student participants showed increased resilience:

- ✗ Lower rates of certain risk behaviors
- ✗ Higher levels of leadership and ability to resist danger
- ✗ Higher levels of positive peer influence
- ✗ Higher rates of homework and school engagement
- ✗ Higher interpersonal competence
- ✗ Increased involvement in service to others

Teachers reported:

- ✗ Increased student involvement in curriculum decisions and interdisciplinary projects
- ✗ Expanded opportunity to work with other teachers and to communicate and integrate teaching activities inside and outside of service-learning projects
- ✗ Shared leadership of projects, leading to greater school teamwork and cooperation
- ✗ Fewer discipline problems, increased attendance and school spirit, and a more positive attitude toward learning among students who participated in service-learning
- ✗ A positive change in the school environment as a result of service-learning: a greater level of respect among teachers and between teachers and students



Somerset students work on a circuit training station.

Students reported:

- ✗ Satisfaction at performing service for the public good
- ✗ Greater ability to know their teachers as multi-dimensional individuals
- ✗ New achievements in taking leadership, particularly for those who had not previously succeeded at leadership in more traditional learning circumstances
- ✗ Understanding and support of service-learning as a teaching method
- ✗ Future plans for service

The universities reported:

- ✗ Inclusion of service-learning in middle level methods courses
 - ✗ Proliferation of service-learning methods by professors involved in the projects
 - ✗ Participating students understood and supported service-learning
- ** A special thanks to the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) for providing training leadership for the project in conjunction with DPI and CESA #2 and CESA #11.

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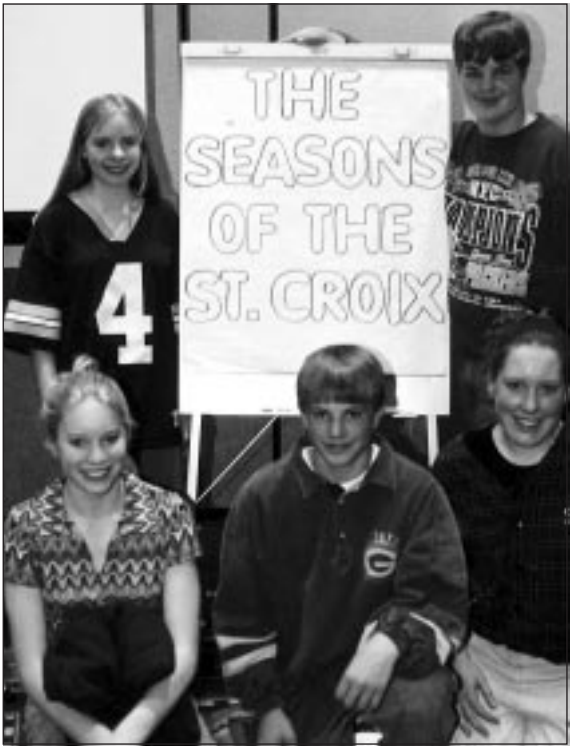
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<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/slhmpage.html>

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FOSTERING
RESILIENCY
2x4x8
THROUGH
SERVICE-LEARNING



Grantsburg Middle School students participated in a number of service-learning projects to improve the St. Croix River.

The Wisconsin 2x4x8 Project
2 = Two CESA regions and two universities
4 = The four point test
8 = The participating middle schools

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction



River Bluff students present their ideas to CNN staff in Washington DC.



Grantsburg Middle School Two students reflect on their experience working on the St. Croix River.



Somerset students work on a circuit training station.

Glenwood City students celebrate the stream cleaning project.



The UW-River Falls Chancellor with staff and a DPI representative accept the UWRF's 2x4x8 award in May 2000.



River Bluff students present Teens Against Teen Pregnancy promotion.



- 40 Assets*
- Family support
- Positive family communication
- Other adult relationships
- Caring neighborhood
- Caring school climate
- Parent involvement in schooling
- Community values youth
- Youth as resources
- Service to others
- Safety
- Family boundaries
- School boundaries
- Neighborhood boundaries
- Adult role models
- Positive peer influence
- High expectations
- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Religious community
- Time at home
- Achievement motivation
- School engagement
- Homework
- Bonding to school
- Reading for pleasure
- Caring
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Restraint
- Planning and decision-making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Resistance skills
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Personal power
- Self-esteem
- Sense of purpose
- Positive view of personal future
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2 x 4 x 8: Fostering Resiliency Through Service-Learning

is a three-year (1996-99) Corporation for National Service (CNS) demonstration project to improve student success by fostering resiliency through service-learning: community service projects connected to classroom learning. This project trained professors in **two** University of Wisconsin schools of education (UW-River Falls and UW-Platteville) to apply the Wisconsin service-learning **four**-point test (outlined right) along with teachers from **eight** Wisconsin middle schools. Primary leadership and support for the project came from two Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs)—CESA 2 and 11, each working with four middle schools.

Wisconsin Service-Learning Four-Point Test

To design projects in which students perform meaningful community service and truly learn from it, Stan Potts from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction created four criteria:

- 1 Young people must be involved and empowered in all phases of the project.**
- 2 The project must deliver genuine service to the community.**
- 3 The project must be linked to classroom learning.**
- 4 The project must include reflection and evaluation.**

To view the complete text go to: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/sl4ptpg.html>

Smoothering cement for picnic tables. Grantsburg 7th and 8th Grade.



Marshall

In a schoolwide project, students raised funds for the Ronald McDonald House by collecting aluminum pop tabs while integrating math and science concepts and also interacted with a landscape architect team in designing the entrance to the middle school. Other projects included a sixth-grade orientation day for fifth graders, a healthy foods snack program, design for a new art room, litter clean-up days, tree and flower planting on Main Street, fundraising for the Humane Society, helping younger students make valentines for infirm elderly, and hosting a carnival for elementary students.

Cambridge Nikolay

Students developed a water quality testing project and distributed findings and recommendations; researched expected summer electrical shortages and developed an emergency plan; identified and labeled plants on a nature walk in the school forest; and restored a trail and a prairie. Other projects included a student-created healthy breakfast program, a school newspaper and yearbook, weekly visits to a nursing home, a clean-up project for local parks, and a cooperative beautification project with the Chamber of Commerce where students added flowerbeds and benches to a small downtown park.

The Picnic Table Project.

Grantsburg Middle School. During the picnic table design process, the seventh graders became aware that only the eighth graders had acquired the knowledge needed to ensure that the platform corners were square. Applying the Pythagorean theorem, the eighth graders soon became hooked on the project as they taught the seventh grade students, demonstrating that learning and service do connect — helping students learn and apply skills while serving their communities.

Resiliency: Search Institute of Minneapolis surveyed over 300,000 students across the country about risk behaviors. Students who had a large number of assets or strengths (see sidebar) were least likely to engage in high-risk behaviors and, therefore, were most resilient: flexible and able to withstand adversity.



Madison Spring Harbor

Students organized an annual carnival for terminally ill children at the University of Wisconsin Hospital, wrote books and designed math and science games for younger children, and provided training to their teachers on how to make Web pages. Sixty eighth graders worked as facilitators, introduced speakers, and put on presentations for an environmental conference. Other projects: fundraising for Habitat for Humanity, the Humane Society, and Ronald McDonald House; an afterschool program for younger children focused on conflict resolution and sportsmanship; and sewing baby clothes for low-income families.

Stoughton River Bluff

Students developed a nationally recognized, award-winning pregnancy prevention video and a public service announcement to raise youth awareness of the effect of media, and developed a peer education program to reduce teen smoking and a video to help students handle peer pressure related to drugs and alcohol. Students also organized a career day that brought 26 speakers and was attended by 300 students. Other projects included tutoring third-grade students in reading, a toy drive, a food drive, a student-led orienteering day in the school forest, cleanup of a bike path, and a fund raiser for the city fire department.

Learning Concepts: Based on the resiliency research, educators participating in the project created a strength-based model, which linked service-learning with risk prevention. This model asks educators and everyone in the community to search for children's strengths and to build on these strengths. Also integrated into training for educators in the project was the concept of whole-brain learning as it relates to service-learning and student academic achievement. As the project developed, these educators were able to see, demonstrated in their classrooms, how service-learning actively involves all learners and builds on individual strengths.

CESA 11
Glenwood City Junior High School
Grantsburg Middle School
Somerset Middle School
Turtle Lake High School
UW River Falls

Glenwood City

Service-learning projects included reclaiming and managing the school forest, completing three maps of walking trails for community use, cleaning the local waterways while studying steam ecology and its connection to animal habitants and pollution, sponsoring a political forum, tapping trees to make maple syrup which was offered to the community at low cost, developing a community choir, forming an intergenerational exchange with a local nursing home, organizing learning activities with kindergarten and first-grade classes, and producing a health fair for elementary students.

Mapping Walking Trails 7th Grade
Glenwood City



The University Connection:

Educators trained in service-learning through the project included middle school teachers and professors from two universities, University of Wisconsin-River Falls and University of Wisconsin-Platteville. These professors led university students training to be teachers and school counselors to examine resiliency issues while engaged in service-learning projects. At the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, for instance, university students studied resiliency in younger students while performing service-learning

Grantsburg

Students built picnic tables for local parks and hospital grounds (see picture), including tables accessible to wheel chairs. In a schoolwide, cross-discipline project, students worked on the St. Croix River, recording volume of river flow, collecting water samples and doing site restoration as they studied leopard frog habitat. They presented findings at the National Service Conference and in two published articles. Working with the Department of Natural Resources, students developed and carried out two surveys, one on deer hunters and the other on sharp-tailed grouse.

Somerset

In a three-year project to enhance the existing cross-country running trail, students created circuit training stations along the course, allowing users to stretch muscles as part of a walk or run. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, this project involved phy-ed and tech-ed teachers to help students understand large muscle usage while designing equipment, science teachers to help students with prairie plant and flower plantings, and language arts teachers to help students write letters requesting community participation. Students also wrote, illustrated and donated books to the elementary school library.

Turtle Lake

Gaining regional and national attention, teachers and staff instituted service-learning in quarterly rotation with Spanish and Art, and all seventh grade students participated. Projects included environmental presentations in the school forest, a low-fat community cookbook, an educational theater for elementary school students, translation of posters into Spanish for migrant workers, a food and clothing drive, a food pantry farming project, help to the elderly in cleaning storm windows, a school newspaper, reclaiming of the school pond, and a toy drive for an international physician team serving children.

CESA 2
Marshall Middle School
Nikolay Middle School
Spring Harbor Middle School
Stoughton Middle School
UW-Platteville

